

April 5, 2011

Senator Joseph I. Lieberman  
Chairman  
Senate Committee on Homeland Security and  
Governmental Affairs  
340 Dirksen Senate Office Building  
Washington, DC 20510

Senator Susan M. Collins  
Ranking Member  
Senate Committee on Homeland Security and  
Governmental Affairs  
350 Dirksen Senate Office Building  
Washington, DC 20510

Dear Chairman Lieberman and Ranking Member Collins:

We are writing to ask you to quickly reintroduce legislation to authorize and promote the public distribution of reports that are published by the Congressional Research Service (CRS).

As you know, CRS products are a valuable, non-partisan resource for informing discussion of nearly every topic of legislative activity, from agricultural subsidies to the space program. These reports play a critical role in our legislative process, and, when made available, inform the public debate about our nation's policies. In the last two years alone, major newspapers cited the Congressional Research Service 779 times, with 70 mentions in the **Washington Post** and 65 in the **New York Times**. The U.S. Supreme Court has cited CRS 34 times and the circuit court made 112 citations, with 130 judicial citations in the last decade. We strongly believe, as we know you do from your past leadership on this issue, that improving public access to CRS reports would help to enrich public discourse and to promote informed citizen engagement in the political process.

We respect the confidentiality of CRS support to Members of Congress, and we have no wish to infringe upon it. We are seeking public access only to those "published" reports that are broadly available to any Member or staff person through the CRS intranet, and not to any private communications between CRS and an individual Member or office.

American taxpayers spend over \$100 million a year to fund the CRS, yet current distribution of these reports is haphazard and often expensive. Several private companies now sell copies of these reports for a price, meaning these reports are readily available to lobbyists, executives and others who can afford to pay. Meanwhile, the vast majority of people lack the information necessary to even request reports from their Members of Congress. And the reports that are publicly available are often out-of-date. The public deserves a consistent and official way to access the non-classified, non-biased information CRS provides.

We urge you to act soon to help lead a formal revision of CRS publication policy in favor of public distribution of non-confidential reports. We will strongly support your efforts.

Representatives from the undersigned organizations would be happy to meet with you or your staff at any time to discuss this important issue. Please contact Daniel Schuman, Policy Counsel, Sunlight Foundation ([dschuman@sunlightfoundation.com](mailto:dschuman@sunlightfoundation.com) or 202-742-1520 x 273), at your convenience.

Sincerely,

American Association of Law Libraries

American Society of News Editors

American Association of University Professors

Association of Research Libraries

American Library Association

Bill of Rights Defense Committee

Center for Fiscal Accountability  
Center for Investigative Journalism- Puerto Rico  
Center for Media and Democracy  
Center for Responsive Politics  
Citizens for Responsibility and Ethics in Washington – CREW  
Colgate University Libraries  
Defending Dissent Foundation  
Electronic Frontier Foundation  
Essential Information  
Federation of American Scientists  
Free Government Information  
Government Accountability Project – GAP  
Investigative Reporters and Editors  
iSolon.org  
Liberty Coalition  
National Coalition for History  
National Security Counselors  
Northern California Association of Law Libraries  
OMB Watch  
OpenTheGovernment.org  
Point of Order  
Progressive Librarians Guild  
Project On Government Oversight – POGO  
Public Citizen  
Reporters Committee for Freedom of the Press  
Society of Professional Journalists  
Special Libraries Association  
Sunlight Foundation  
Union of Concerned Scientists  
Washington Coalition for Open Government  
Western Carolina University Libraries  
WildEarth Guardians